

Hope for the Discouraged and Depressed, Part 1 - Romans 8:1-2 – March 11th, 2012

- If you're anything like me, and I suspect that you are, you've been so looking forward to Romans chapter eight having completed chapter seven.
- While we needed to spend an adequate amount of time in it, we shouldn't spend too much time in it for what would be deemed obvious reasons.
- Chief amongst them being that chapter seven is a depressing and discouraging chapter. Actually that's what prepares us for what's in chapter 8.
- One commentator said it best this way; "Romans 8 begins with no condemnation; it ends with no separation, and in between there is no defeat."
- Donald Barnhouse had this to say about it; "whenever a believer's Bible accidentally falls on the floor it should automatically open to Romans 8."

Another commentator of this said; "Romans 8 is the true antidote for depression. When a person is going through depression, it's always in one of three areas. Either they're haunted by something in the past, anxious about something in the future, or weighed down by something in the present. Romans 8 is the perfect solution for all three. Verse 1 declares there is no condemnation concerning the past. Verses 38-39 promise there can be no separation from God's love in the future and verse 8:28 states that all things are working together for good in the present.

- It's for this reason that I've chosen to title this new series; "Hope for the Discouraged and Depressed," and today's teaching will be part one.
- My hope and prayer is, that we as believers, and as a church, will never look back by the time we complete this fabulous chapter in God's Word.
- Perhaps better said, chapter eight in this, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, has the propensity to utterly change our lives, for the rest of our lives.
- I know that saying this, this way, may border on the sensational, and even provocative, however, Romans chapter eight is really that template.
- What I mean by this is the Holy Spirit has sort of taken this chapter and created a template, both of, and for, finding a way out of our depression.
- Romans chapter eight becomes a model for us, and in so doing, shows us the way out of the discouragement and depression of chapter seven.
- Before we jump into our first way out, I think it's of the utmost importance that we reestablish a vital truth, and one for which we must know.
- What we're about to see, as the Apostle Paul rises from the pages of this chapter to show us, will never become a reality absent the Holy Spirit.
- It's only in the "how" of the Holy Spirit empowering us to do the "what" of the Holy Word that we're enabled to find the "Who" that is Jesus Christ.

William Newell – We have now come to that great chapter which sets forth that part in our salvation, which is exercised by the third Person of the Godhead, the blessed Holy Spirit. Without Christ's work on the cross there would be no salvation, and without the presence and constant operation of the Holy Spirit, there would be no application of that salvation to us, —indeed, no revelation of it to us! Let us therefore with the profoundest reverence, and greatest gladness, take up the study here in Romans Eight of that work of the Holy Spirit which is directly concerned with our salvation: for Romans is a book of salvation. ... But the teaching of the work of the Holy Ghost in Romans regards His fundamental operations, —just as it is fundamental phases of Christ's work that are presented here. The Eighth Chapter of Romans is the instinctive goal of the Christian. Whether or not he can tell why—whether or not he can give the great doctrinal facts that give him comfort here, he is, nevertheless, like a storm-tossed mariner who has arrived at his home port, and has cast anchor, when he comes into Romans Eight!

1. Hope is found in conviction not condemnation (Verses 1-2)

(1) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, (2) because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

- v1 Paul writes what could arguably be one of the most powerful verses in all the Bible saying there's no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.
- v2 The reason there's no condemnation is because through Christ Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life sets me free from the law of sin and death.
- In other words, there's no longer condemnation that comes from the law of sin and death, rather it's conviction from the law of the Spirit of life.

Charles Spurgeon - "We perhaps need to consider the flip side: If you are *not* in Jesus Christ, *there is condemnation for you*. "It is no pleasant task to us to have to speak of this matter; but who are we that we should ask for pleasant tasks? What God hath witnessed in Scripture is the sum and substance of what the Lord's servants are to testify to the people. If you are not in Christ Jesus, and are walking after the flesh, you have not escaped from condemnation."

- I believe, having experienced this personally in my walk with Christ, that guilt and condemnation may be the number one cause of depression.
- Let me explain, when we listen to the devil constantly condemning us, it's evidence that we've not been set free from the law of sin and death.
- Instead of the conviction of the Holy Spirit, which draws me closer to the Lord, the condemnation of the Devil will distance me from the Lord.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in his wonderful book titled; "Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Its Cure," hits the nail right on the head; ..."in the last analysis, the one and only cause of spiritual depression is the Devil, the adversary of our souls. He can use our temperaments and our physical condition, and there is no end to the ways in which the devil produces spiritual depression. We must always bear him in mind. The devil's one object is so to depress God's people.... ...Indeed I can put it, finally, like this; the ultimate cause of all spiritual depression is unbelief. ...It is because we listen to the Devil instead of listening to God that we go down before him and fall before his attacks."

- By way of illustration, let me paint a picture of what this looks like, and how this plays out in the life of a believer continually attacked spiritually.
- Satan knows that his power tool of condemnation can dismantle our belief in Jesus Christ, so in a way you could see it as the Devil's end game.
- In order for him to get you to that destructive end, he first has to tempt you to sin. Once you are enticed and sin, then the condemnation sets in.
- Once the condemnation sets in, the Devil is then allowed to imprison you behind the bars of your own spiritual discouragement and depression.
- To make matters worse, this state of spiritual depression will begin to feed upon itself and in so doing, take you down to the depths of despair.
- In a sense, we ourselves are cannibalizing ourselves spiritually by making everything about our self because now we've become "self-centered."
- Satan has succeeded in getting us to shift our focus off of the Lord and His promises, and instead we focus on ourselves, and our problems.

Again, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, writes; "...If we are always talking to people about ourselves and our problems and troubles, and if we are forever going to them with that kind of frown upon our face and saying: I am in great difficulty, it probably means that we are all the time centered upon ourselves."

- For those of you who were here on last Thursday night for our Bible Study in Joshua chapter three you may already be connecting these dots.
- We saw how that the Israelites were camped for three days at the banks of the raging and roaring Jordan River, which they were about to cross.
- Joshua tells them to get their eyes off the insurmountable and even impossible obstacle of crossing the Jordan and keep their eyes on the Ark.

Joshua 3:4-5 (4) Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed *this* way before." **(5)** And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

- What's interesting about this is that they are to keep their eyes on the Ark, but at the same time they are to keep their distance from the Ark.
- We're even given the specific detail of that distance from the Ark, which would be measured at about 1,000 yards, or ten football fields. Why?
- Because distance is what would enable all of the, approximately 2-3 million, Israelites to have the ark within their sights with nobody in the way.
- Had they not done this, instead of having their eyes on the ark, their eyes would have been on others. You may already see where I'm going.
- Perhaps you've heard it said that if my eyes are on others I'm stressed, if they're on myself I'm depressed, but if they're on the Lord I'm blessed.
- This echo's what the Apostle Paul says to these Christians in Rome and it's what Joshua says to the Israelites on the banks of the Jordan River.
- If you're discouraged and depressed, hope will return when you get your focus off of yourself and your problems, and get your eyes on Jesus.
- By continuing to focus on my self and problems, they'll get bigger. Condemnation will give way to depression leading to my ultimate destruction.
- If this is you here today this need not be, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death.